

THE LEONARD LETTER

July 3, 2006

SPECIAL INDEPENDENCE DAY QUOTE

“Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor;--let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children’s liberty. Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;--let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;--let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.” --- Abraham Lincoln, age 28, The Lyceum Address 1838 Springfield, Illinois

AROUND THE STATE

Slivers of Money

One the state budget stories last week got me ranting at the press again. A Sacramento Bee writer opened her story with the line, “A small sliver -- less than 1 percent -- of the \$131 billion budget...” Do you know how big a “small sliver” is? In this case, it’s over a quarter of a billion dollars. Of all of the state’s competing priorities for public funding, for any specific program to get one percent is a big deal and not a sliver. After all, add up just 100 of those one percent slivers and you will have spent the entire budget. I am not asking for reporters to be math geniuses, but I would appreciate some proper perspective.

Which brings me to my second rant: the sliver in the story is new money being dedicated to the high school exam. This is the exam that makes sure that high school graduates have at least an eighth grade education in math and English. Now you might think that the billions of dollars going to California’s government schools would include eighth grade math and English. And I know they do include this. But some kids who are not exempt from the exam are still unable to pay attention long enough to pick up these skills by the end of the twelfth grade. So the state budget has a plan. These educrats want to spend almost \$300 million on extra classes and counseling for those who do not pass this exam. I want these kids to pass this test, but I do have to point out: this is school money that is not going to school districts as part of the general education apportionments. My

guess that this money will not change the pass rate by much at all, and it should have been left to the discretion of the local school board to decide how to spend.

*****A Rose By Any Other Name*****

from the Bill Leonard blog 6/30/2006

The first thing that struck me about the new state employee contract is that the name of the union has changed. For as long as I have been around, state employees were represented by the California State Employees Association (CSEA). Now CSEA's name is nowhere to be seen; state workers are now represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1000. CSEA was always a proud, unique voice for state employees; SEIU, now with its Local 1000, is just like any other worldwide corporate conglomerate gobbling up the local outlet. CSEA stalwarts fought hard against this change, but now the transition is complete. It's no longer "California state employees"; it's "service employees" who belong to Local 1000.

ISSUE FOCUS

****Welfare Reform Correcting Teen Pregnancy Epidemic****

In April, National Review revisited an issue of great importance, teen pregnancy. There is good news to report. Since the 1996 federal welfare reform, births to teenage mothers have dropped dramatically. In the 18-19 year old group, the number of births per 1,000 teenagers has declined from around 85 to 70 per thousand, and the trend line is going down. In 1970 there were more than 110 births per thousand. (Similar results are reported for other age groups.)

It is important when talking about this to point out that a teenager getting pregnant is not the end of the world. To say so encourages young women to have abortions, which serves no one. What is true is that teenage motherhood is often accompanied by poverty and a less wholesome environment for the kids, too often without a father. It clearly has much to do with generations of Americans being unable to successfully escape a life of dependency and stunted potential. For these reasons it is something that needs correcting, not because babies themselves are bad for society – in fact, the opposite is true.

The 1996 welfare reform did a couple of important things toward discouraging teen pregnancy. The bill required teen mothers under the age of 18 to stay with a parent if they received welfare, and allowed states to use employment data to track down unsupportive fathers. It also encouraged capping benefits so children were no longer seen as a way to extend one's stay on welfare.

Critics of welfare reform say that the teen pregnancy rate was already declining before 1996. This is true, except in the late 1980s the rate went up sharply before starting to

trend down again in 1993. And, according to National Review, studies have shown those states that were tougher on teen parenthood after 1996 saw bigger declines than other states. While other factors may have started the downtrend, welfare reform has extended it. As NR notes, the good news is that incentives matter and that the 1996 welfare reform got it right.

*****Acknowledging Our Creator*****

Independence Day reminds me of role of God in the founding of the United States. When we read the Declaration of Independence, the reliance on God is clear, but I learned recently that Divine guidance is also clear in every single state constitution. I had only ever read California's preamble ("We, the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this Constitution.") Now I have reviewed the constitutions of the other 49 states and found it fascinating and instructive that the drafters saw nothing wrong with mentioning God in these important public documents. Here are just a few samples:

Alaska (1956): "Preamble. We, the people of Alaska, grateful to God and to those who founded our nation and pioneered this great land ..."

Arizona (1911): "Preamble. We, the people of the State of Arizona, grateful to Almighty God for our liberties, do ordain this Constitution..."

Colorado (1876): "Preamble. We, the people of Colorado, with profound reverence for the Supreme Ruler of Universe ..."

Illinois (1870): "Preamble. We, the people of the State of Illinois, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy and looking to Him for a blessing on our endeavors..."

New Hampshire (1792): "Part I. Art. I. Sec. V. Every individual has a natural and unalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience."

Texas (1845): "Preamble. We the People of the Republic of Texas, acknowledging, with gratitude, the grace and beneficence of God ..."

MISCELLANY

*****The Streets of San Francisco*****

This week we celebrate the annexation of the California territory into the United States. As I was reviewing this history, I found it interesting that some of San Francisco's most prominent streets are named for the military leadership that secured California for the U.S. during the Mexican War. Portsmouth Square is named for the U.S.S. PORTSMOUTH which was Commodore Sloat's ship. The sloop's Commander, John B.

Montgomery, was the namesake for Montgomery Street. Fremont Street was named for Colonel John C. Fremont; Kearney Street for Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny who liberated San Diego from the Mexicans.; Stockton Street for Commodore Stockton who combined his forces with those of Kearny's and took Los Angeles after the Battle of the San Gabriel River. Two thoughts: 1) what do many of San Francisco's modern, "progressives" think of these martial origins? And 2) if we could ask them today, what would Sloat, Fremont, Stockton, et al, think of San Francisco?

*****California County History*****

Mono County was created 1861. It is named for Mono Lake, which in 1852, was named for an Indian tribe that inhabited the Sierra Nevada from north of Mono Lake to Owens Lake. Mono County is in the eastern central portion of California, just east of the Sierra Nevada and between Yosemite National Park and Nevada. The native Paiute Indians lived in areas that had hot springs—areas now known as Big Hot, Travertine, Fales, and Buckeye—and the shores of Mono Lake. They were known as the Monos or the Monachi, which translates as “the fly people,” because they collected fly larvae for food.

The first white settlers in the area were brothers William T. and G. A. Whitney who settled on the west side of the valley about 1859-60. George Byron “By” Day brought the first wagons up the West Walker River into Bridgeport, when there was only an Indian trail through the canyon. According to the Mono County Historical Society, “Day was one of the first white men to spend a winter in the valley and legend has it that his horses survived the winter by eating tree bark.”

When the county was formed, its seat was named at Aurora, a town that was booming due to mining. Two years later a survey showed that Aurora was in Nevada, not California. Mono County’s official business moved to Bodie and then later to Bridgeport. In 1864, Bridgeport became the official county seat. The Historical Society reports that the original Mono County courthouse in Bridgeport is still being used and is the second oldest operating courthouse in California.

*****A Good Read*****

If you have children home 24/7 now because of summer vacation, you may be tempted to plan them in front of the television, hand them a video game or send them to the movies to overcome their whines of boredom. Before you succumb to that temptation, read “Home Invasion: Protecting Your Family in a Culture That's Gone Stark Raving Mad” by Rebecca Hagelin. Hagelin is vice president at the Heritage Foundation and her book is a very practical guide for parents battling to let their children be children for as long as possible. She reviews the barrage of media immorality with which we are all familiar, but she also cautions about some less obvious intrusions. For example, she discusses the blatant sexual immorality and explicitness in some books on the recommended summer reading lists for young women. Her book is a clarion call for parents to take control over what their children are exposed to and how to make technology work for your family

instead of undermining it. In a recent speech published in “Imprimis,” Hagelin impressed me with this speech that she gives in response to her 13-year-old daughter’s cry “But Mom, all my friends are going to that movie”: “You know what, Kristin? God made me your mom, and I love you more than anyone else in the world could possibly love you. I have to do what I think is best for you. Please allow me to be your Mom, allow me to love you, allow me to protect you the best way I know how. I might make mistakes, but as long as there is breath in me, I will be here for you.” With examples like that, Hagelin’s book is an excellent resource for parents.

BOE AND LEGISLATIVE DATES

July 4, 2006 --- Independence Day.

July 7, 2006 --- Summer recess begins on adjournment if Budget Bill is passed. Note: The Budget Bill did pass last week and legislators gave themselves an extra week of recess to celebrate.

July 18-19, 2006 --- BOE meets in Sacramento.

August 7, 2006 --- Legislature reconvenes from summer recess.

August 16, 2006 --- BOE meets in San Diego.

August 29 & 30, 2006 --- BOE meets in Sacramento.

August 31, 2006 --- Final recess of legislature begins upon adjournment.

NOTABLE DATES/ HISTORY

July 3, 1775 --- George Washington takes command of the Continental Army of the American colonies at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

July 3, 1852 --- Congress authorized the U.S.'s fifth mint (San Francisco).

July 3, 1861--- The Pony Express arrived in San Francisco with overland letters from New York.

July 3, 1863 --- A Confederate charge led by General George E. Pickett failed to break the Union line in the Battle of Gettysburg, sealing a Union victory and turning the tide of the Civil War.

July 3, 1945 --- The first civilian passenger car built since February of 1942 was driven off the assembly line at the Ford Motor Company plant in Detroit, MI. Automotive production had been diverted to military production for the war effort.

July 3, 1976 --- 103 hostages were rescued by an Israeli commando unit in a raid on Entebbe airport in Uganda. 106 hostages had been taken from a hijacked Air France airliner on its way to Paris from Tel Aviv. Seven pro-Palestinian guerrilla hijackers, 20 Ugandan soldiers and three hostages were killed in the raid.

July 4, 1776 --- The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, declaring the colonies to be “Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved.”

July 4, 1802 --- The U.S. Military Academy officially opened (West Point, NY).

July 4, 1826 --- John Adams, the second president of the U.S., and Thomas Jefferson, the third president, died on the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

July 4, 1876 --- In San Francisco, the electric light was demonstrated to the public for the first time.

July 4, 1881 --- Booker T Washington established the Tuskegee Institute.

July 4, 1882 --- The Telegraph Hill Observatory opened in San Francisco.

July 4, 1884 --- The Statue of Liberty was presented to the U.S. by France in Paris.

July 4, 1933 --- Work began on the Oakland Bay Bridge.

July 4, 1942 --- The first American bombing mission over enemy-occupied Europe in WWII took place.

July 5, 1938 --- Herb Caen's first column appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle.

July 6, 1785 --- Congress gave the name “dollar” to U.S. currency and adopted coinage based on the decimal system.

July 6, 1854 --- The first Republican state convention was held in Ripon, Wisconsin.

July 7, 1846 --- California was annexed by the United States during the Mexican American War. Commodore John Drake Sloat, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, officially annexed the California Republic for the United States by raising the stars and stripes at Monterey on July 7, 1846

July 7, 1930 --- Construction began on Boulder (Hoover) Dam.

July 8, 1776 --- The Liberty Bell rang out from the tower of Pennsylvania's old State House, summoning citizens to the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence by Colonel John Nixon.

July 8, 1932 --- The Dow Jones Industrial Average hit the low point during the Depression at 41.22.

July 8, 1981 --- The Senate confirmed Sandra Day O'Connor to Supreme Court (99-0).

July 9, 1776 --- The Declaration of Independence was read aloud to General Washington's troops in New York.

GENERAL TAX INFORMATION

For answers to your general tax questions, call the Board of Equalization information center. Customer service representatives are available to help you from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific time, Monday through Friday (except state holidays).

Toll-free number: 800-400-7115
TDD service for the hearing impaired
TDD phones: 800-735-2929
Voice phones: 800-735-2922

To reach the Taxpayer Rights Advocate's office for assistance with any BOE issues, see <http://www.boe.ca.gov/tra/tra.htm>, or call toll-free 1-888-324-2798.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Bill Leonard, Member
State Board of Equalization, Second District
Email: bill.leonard@boe.ca.gov

Northern California Office:

400 Capitol Mall, Suite 2340
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone: (916) 445-2181
Fax: (916) 327-4003

Southern California Office:
4295 E. Jurupa Ave., Ste. 204
Ontario, CA 91761-1428
Telephone: (909) 937-6106
Fax: (909) 937-7044